

# Harpswell Community Garden 2020 Annual Report

---



---

## overview

In 2020, COVID-19 affected the Community Garden along with other aspects of community life this year. A flurry of plot rentals may have been in response to social distancing and the nationwide DIY trends. With restrictions already in place by the time our season opened, we secured an Essential Service Designation from the state, and established a plan for virus prevention that followed CDC guidelines and the Governor's mandate. This included cancelling educational programs, youth day camp activities, and group volunteer days in order to comply with the safety measures.

We maintained our partnerships between our Common Good Garden (CGG) and the Town's weekly food pantry, the Harpswell Aging at Home meals programs, and MidCoast Hunger Prevention Program. Our part-time garden assistant helped greatly with garden maintenance and the tending and harvesting of CGG produce.

## gardens & gardeners

100% of plots were rented in 2020, with 18 individuals or families involved as plot holders. While all but one of our 2019 gardeners intended to return, three were unable to travel back to Maine from their winter residences due to COVID limitations. New perennial and annual plants were donated for the communal herb garden, a popular resource for our gardeners. Three young families were actively involved with plots and as volunteers.

## infrastructure

**Pergola:** Construction of a pergola began in 2020, with a few adjustments to be made in Spring 2021. Sited between the entrance and the rental plots, the pergola will give gardeners a much-needed place to sit out of the sun to rest or work on projects. A local contractor graded and filled a packed stone base, helping to make this accessible to strollers and those with mobility limitations. Our volunteers did the construction work.

Once COVID restrictions can be eased, we look forward to welcoming children's groups and others to this space.

**Water system:** In early August, our well pump failed because it couldn't meet the demand for water. A larger replacement pump and solar power upgrade were acquired and installed with advice and labor donated by Burt Temple and Brent Dudley. Our garden assistant and volunteers were also key to making this happen. Another team of volunteers strengthened the support system for the above-ground section of piping.

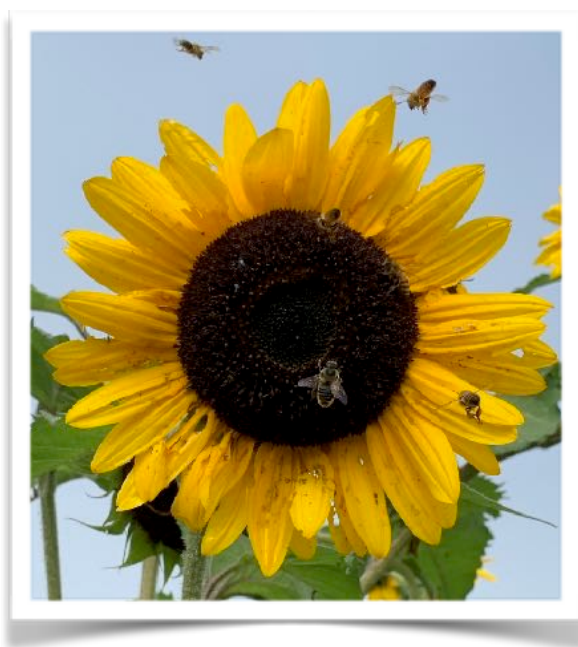
We hope that we finally have a reliable source of clean, safe water.



---

**Fencing:** We completed the last small area of in-ground fence barrier and purchased a new gate which will be installed Spring 2021. The new gate is lighter, can more easily opened and closed, and will be fitted closer to the ground. The fence is more secure and the perimeter can be monitored for damage or entry points. When the new gate is installed, pest animals should decline. We expect to continue using Havahart traps as a backstop to the improved fencing.

**Parking Area:** The original plan for the garden included an off-road parking area. Following a bid process, the committee decided to defer this project due to the estimated expense. We will monitor traffic, including when the new boat launch is completed, to see if increased road traffic warrants the investment.



## perennial challenges

**Drought:** Harpswell experienced dry conditions again this summer, and our well pump failed during the drought. Gardeners had to carry water from home for several weeks until the pump was replaced.

**Wildlife:** The reinforced fence reduced points of entry for pest mammals, but we still had a vulnerable spot at the gate. Animal pressure increased during the drought and gardeners lost a lot of tomatoes and other crops. We expect less animal traffic after the gate is replaced in 2021. Trapping efforts will be continued if needed.

**Drainage:** While prior years' work solved most of the wet soil issues in the orchard, the spring weather showed that work remained in the common areas. The grading for the pergola base and adjacent area may improve this, but we expect additional regrading and perhaps improved drainage to address the remaining areas of pooling water.

---

## volunteer efforts

No volunteer groups were able to pitch in this year, but our gardeners performed many chores and participated in several Work Days throughout the season. Over 630 volunteer hours were spent on pathway maintenance; lawn mowing and weed whacking; pergola construction; perimeter fencing improvement; well pump replacement and solar energy system upgrade; and maintaining our systems.

Many volunteer hours were contributed to Common Good Garden planting, upkeep, and harvest, with several dependable volunteers harvesting and transporting produce for donation.



## grants

We were awarded a \$5,738 grant from Harpswell Heritage Land Trust in 2020, which provided for operating expenses and allowed us to build a pergola, hire a Garden Assistant, and pay capital/infrastructure expenses. A balance of our 2019 grant from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund enabled us to finish the fence upgrade project.

## communications

There was such a high level of community interest in growing food in a garden plot at HCG that we didn't need to publicize it with brochures and posters. Current lists of chores needing to be done were emailed periodically to gardeners, as well as project updates and helpful tips.



---

## gardening for the common good project

**Overview:** We started the year with another cold, wet spring that delayed planting of spring crops by a couple of weeks. Bethany Taylor was hired as garden assistant and was an invaluable member of our team from June through late November. Mary Ruchinskas continues to manage all aspects of the Common Garden, with Peg Newberg overseeing harvests and delivery.

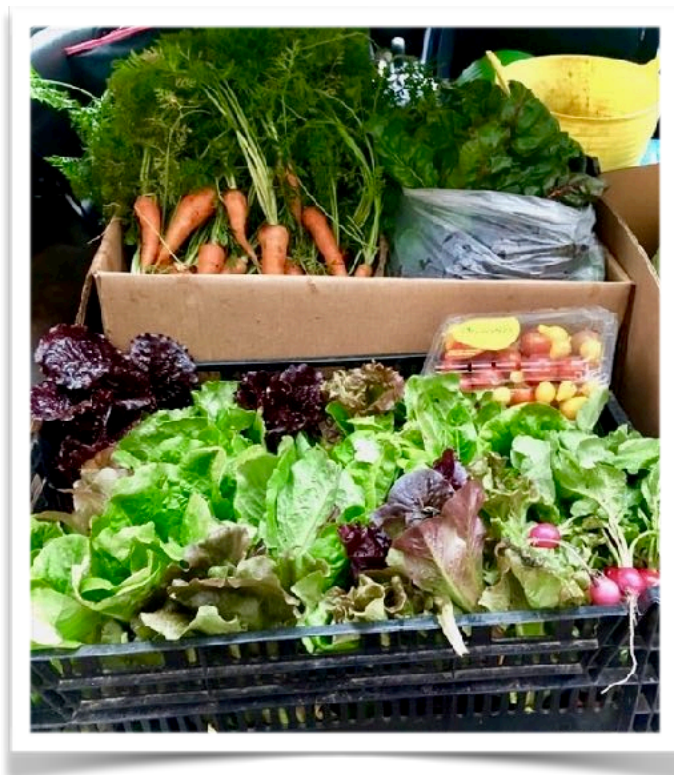
**Production:** The Common Good Garden produced 1,386 pounds of organic vegetables that were donated throughout the community this year. The volume of food was a bit lower than in previous years, mainly due to the drought.

We also planted less area than usual since all of our plots were rented this summer, where we would normally use empty plots for additional Common Good Garden plantings. Onions again were our largest crop by weight, followed by: cucumbers, beets, carrots, cabbage, and chard.

**Harvest and Distribution:** As with everything else in 2020, our distribution plans changed several times during the year. The Food Mobile started a weekly schedule at the Town Office this spring, but their system changed to pre-packing everything in Brunswick, which was impractical for including our vegetables.

In late May, we began bringing our donations to the MCHPP food bank. Early in July we also started giving some produce to HAH's "Meals in a Pinch" every two weeks to use in their cooking. In August, HAH and the Merrymeeting Gleaners began a weekly "Sharing Table" giveaway every week at three locations in town. We joined this effort, pledging to donate 10 grocery bags of veggies every Monday morning. We were able to fulfill this pledge until late October when the program ended, filling 110 bags with a total of 730 pounds of produce.

Overall, we contributed to seven HAH "Meals" and eleven "Sharing Tables," totaling almost 800 pounds distributed in Harpswell. The remainder of our food went to MCHPP in Brunswick. Since 2015, our volunteers have donated a total of 9,250 pounds of organic vegetables to the community.



---

## 2020 goals accomplished

We secured an Essential Service Designation from the state, and established COVID-19 guidelines to keep gardeners safe. HCG remained a valued resource in the community, renting all plots to residents and distributing food through our partners.

We showed resilience in quickly replacing our failed well pump with a more appropriate model, getting water back to the garden as soon as possible, particularly during a drought and the pandemic. We mostly completed two key projects, including perimeter fencing animal barriers and building a pergola, and continued progress on grading and drainage.

## community support

The Harpswell Community Garden greatly appreciates the contributions of individuals and organizations during the 2020 season. Following is a partial listing.

### *Groups and individuals who volunteered time and labor*

Mary Brennan	Don Miskill
Dave Brown	Kristy, Rob & Grace Montana
Connie Bissias	Peg Newberg
David Chipman	Jamie Pacheco
Jane Covey	Scott Rose & Elizabeth Bailey
Joan & Bob Dehetre	Mary Ruchinskas
Lance Demond	Judith Stanton
Maya & Brit Dumas	Susan Stemper
Tom French	Paul Weeden & family
John Holland	Bob Yanders
Peter Lieberwirth	



### *Businesses and organizations who donated materials, services and funds in 2020*

Ackme Survey / Frank Holdgate  
Dramm Corporation  
Field's Auto  
Harpswell Garden Club  
Harpswell Heritage Land Trust  
Temple Well Drilling  
Town of Harpswell Recreation Department  
Merrymeeting Gleaners  
UMaine Cooperative Extension  
Vail's Tree Service



---

## *Harpswell Community Garden Committee*

Cyndy Bush  
Jane Covey  
Peg Newberg  
Jamie Pacheco

Mary Ruchinskas  
Judith Stanton  
Susan Stemper

### **2020 financial report**

**Revenue:** Well pump replacement and solar panel upgrade. This unbudgeted project was supported by Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, with funds reallocated from other intended uses. Volunteers (including professionals) contributed significant labor and expertise, the full value of which we cannot accurately estimate.

**Garden Assistant:** This position, which was filled with a highly-qualified candidate and funded by Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, was instrumental in 2020. Absent the availability of community volunteer groups (due to COVID precautions), this position was crucial to our operations in 2020.

**Garden Operations and Drainage:** Water diversion and common area grading for pergola base activities were undertaken by Frank Holdgate of Ackme Survey and funded by the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust.

**Fence Upgrade:** The gate purchase was funded by The New England Grassroots Fund for our volunteer project to 'critter proof' the garden fence, with an additional \$17 from the HHLT grant.

**Pergola Construction:** Materials were funded by the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust grant. Volunteers (including professionals) contributed significant labor and expertise the full value of which we cannot accurately estimate.

**Rental Income:** Consistent with national trends for gardening, plot rental income at the garden was above budget, with more rentals than in the prior year. This unrestricted revenue helps fund our activities.

**Common Good Garden Project:** Materials were funded through garden fees and unrestricted donations. Seedling donations are not shown in the report.

**Expenses:** The well pump replacement and solar upgrade account for most of the 2020 garden expenses. Given the need to reprioritize to this, our drainage/grading, fence gate installation and many of our other operating expense-based activities have been delayed until the 2021 season.

**Volunteer recognition:** Gift Cards to thank two professional volunteers were purchased in 2020 to honor activities from 2019.

There were significant variances in operating expenses, primarily a result of reallocating expenses to the well pump replacement and solar upgrade. Some of these items will be addressed in 2021 or other future years.

## HARPSWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

	Garden Budget	Common Good Garden Project	Total Budget	Total Actual
<b>Funds Available:</b>				
HHLT Grant *	6171		6171	\$ 5,738
Rental income		500	500	\$ 655
Cash donations				\$ 100
NEGREF grant carry over funds	909		909	\$ 933
HCG reserve funds		600	600	
<b>Total Funds Available</b>	<b>7080</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>8180</b>	<b>\$ 7,426</b>
<b>Garden Expenses:</b>				
<b>Infrastructure</b>				
Fence Improvement completion	1410		1410	\$ 950
Grading and driveway repair	1000		1000	
Common area soil grading & seeding	1500		1500	\$ 411
Pergola	600		600	\$ 517
Well pump and solar panels				\$ 2,548
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4510</b>		<b>4510</b>	<b>\$ 4,426</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>				
Equipment maintenance	350		350	
Water system maintenance	250		250	
Fuel for mowers	80		80	\$ 34
Landscape cloth (250ft), pins	80		80	
Landscape pins	45		45	
Water tank cover	50		50	
Flame weeder	300		300	
Garden supply	125		125	\$ 40
Paint for garden shed	60		60	
Part time garden assistant (50%)	900		900	\$ 1,658
Outreach/Education Materials	100		100	\$ 233
Volunteer support and recognition	150		150	\$ 110
Fruiting plants	80		80	\$ 68
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2570</b>		<b>2570</b>	<b>\$ 2,143</b>
<b>Common Good Garden</b>				
Soil amendments/fertilizer/pest control		100	100	\$ 102
Irrigation supply		100	100	
Part time garden assistant (50%)		900	900	
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>1100</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>\$ 102</b>
<b>Total 2020 Expenses:</b>	<b>7080</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>8180</b>	<b>\$ 6,671</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>\$ 755</b>

### Reserve Funds:

2019 Reserve Fund Carry Over	\$ 4,131
2020 Reserve Fund Balance	\$ 3,953